

Palestine: Ottomans, Zionism, and the Formation of Israel

How the British Caused the Palestine-Israel Conflict

Palestine has been a land that has been important to three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jews consider it their Holy Land or the Promised Land of “Eretz Israel”, making this land a focal point of Jewish national identity. For both Jews and Christians, this land is the birthplace of Jesus and the birthplace of Judaism and Christianity. For Muslims, the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem was the place where the Prophet Muhammad went on his night journey of Mai’raj. This area in the Middle East has attracted many pilgrims, scholars, and monks. Many kings and kingdoms have taken control of Palestine throughout history from Canaanites in the late Bronze Age, to Alexander the Great in 330 BCE, to the Romans in 70 CE, to the earliest Muslims in 640 CE, and the Crusaders in the 12th century, to the British for a small time in the 20th century, and to present day Israel. The state of Israel was formed out of a series of fights and conflicts in this land. Palestine is now a centre of many political activities with the most notable and notorious one being the conflict between the states Palestine and Israel. In order to understand Palestinian history regarding how the entire Palestine-Israel conflict started, the starting point should be the Ottoman Empire. The events of the Ottoman Empire had a great role in shaping Palestine as we see today.

The Ottomans had conquered Palestine and Syria following their victory over the Mamluks (Sultanat al Mamalik) at the Battle of Marj Dabiq in 1516. Pluralistically and holistically, the status of dhimmis given by Ottomans to their non-Muslim subjects was far better than those of Jews in medieval, pre-modern and modern Europe. Mainly because they were protected by legislation of Islam. The status of dhimmi literally means "protected", so that means that these "protected" people would be protected citizens by the government and they, by law, require the government to act swiftly as soon as anyone or any mob threatened their safety. It's not to say that attacks on Jews were never a thing, but tolerance and a peaceful environment was true for the most part. The status of dhimmi also meant that non-Muslim people living in the Ottoman Empire were subject to the jizya tax, and on top of that, they also had to wear special clothing to differentiate themselves from Muslims, and building religious places of worship and public religious practices and processions were to require government approval. The Jews were free to have their own communities and schools.

The Ottoman Empire became a haven for Iberian (present day Spain and Portugal) Jews who fled the persecution of Jews (as a result of the Alhambra decree) and Muslims that followed the Spanish Reconquista in 1492. Aside from Spain, Jews had also been expelled from England in 1290 and from France in 1306. Ottoman Jews prospered during the 16th and 17th century, because of their economic contributions and also partly because the Ottomans had allowed non-Muslims to hold positions that involved contacts with foreigners. Even though there were restrictions of Jews, there was no barrier for Jews to the survival of Jewish culture within the Ottoman Empire. The Jews of the Ottoman Empire contributed significantly in the development of the Ottoman Empire. However, Palestinian history is deeply connected with the causes of the Ottoman downfall. If anything is to be summarized it's that the treaties and agreements that weakened Ottoman supremacy were made when the Ottomans were at their peak.



Spanish Reconquista, 1492

One such example of such treaties is that the Ottoman sultans had allowed European traders to trade within their lands under protection of legal immunity. This allowed the Europeans to negotiate from a position of strength, because visibly it posed no threat to the Ottomans, but it would gradually pose a threat in the 18th century when the balance of power would shift greatly. The middle of the 18th century was a time when the Europeans had made great strides in their economies and military.

In the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, this was the first time when the Ottomans were forced to deal with Europeans as equals and they would lose some territory to them. The Treaty of Karlowitz came as a result of the Great Turkish war from 1683-97, with their first major territorial loss after centuries of expansion. It was a series of battles of the Ottomans against the Habsburgs, Poland-Lithuania, Venice, and Russia. European demands for greater influence on Ottoman Christians expanded European authority into the Ottoman areas. Since then European military actions and ambitions were accompanied by European demand for greater influence over Ottoman Christians. The first treaty between the Ottomans and the French was in 1740. It granted France to protect Roman Catholics in the Ottoman Empire, instead of the Ottomans seeing them as their dhimmis. It also gave France the right to represent Christian interest to the Ottomans. Traders would also be exempt from local taxation. French priests were given privileges to build churches in Palestine. Christian Maronites of Lebanon made deals with the Roman Catholic Church and were qualified for French tutelage. French tutelage would mean French guardianship and French instruction.

Equally significant was the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji of 1774. This was signed after the Russians had driven the Ottomans out of Crimea and gained access to the Black Sea, which was a result of the Russo-Turkish war from 1768-74. This also led to Russia demanding and receiving the right of building a Greek Orthodox Church under Russian protection in Istanbul. This allowed Russians to intercede on behalf of the clergy, and later Russian pilgrims to later gain access to Palestine. Later, Russian Orthodox clergy were allowed to build churches and hostels in Palestine.

In October 1831, Muhammad Ali of Egypt dispatched his modernized army commanded by his son Ibrahim Pasha in a campaign to annex Ottoman Syria, including Palestine. This is known as the first Egyptian-Ottoman war. This resulted in Egypt's victory over the Ottomans. While Egyptian rule in Palestine and Syria did bring about some reforms in the region, it didn't come without revolts and rebellion. For example, the Peasant's revolt in Palestine which was a rebellion against Egyptian taxation policies in Palestine. 1840 and onwards, the Ottomans would regain control over Palestine after the Second Egyptian-Ottoman war and that wouldn't be without British intervention.

By the early to mid-1800s, Europeans were hiring Arab Christians to represent them in selling European goods that were mass produced and cheaper than those sold by Muslim merchants. This caused a growing resentment among Muslims towards the Christians. In 1838, the British forced upon the Ottomans the Balta Liman Convention. This lowered protective tariffs, and opened Ottoman lands to the products of the industrial revolution. This would affect the livelihood of many people in the Ottoman regions. The terms of the treaty stated that, the Ottoman Empire will abolish all monopolies, allow British merchants and their collaborators to have full access to all Ottoman markets and will be taxed equally as the local merchants. The local markets on which Ottoman Muslims depend on was consequently undermined to the advantage and profit of Arab Christians and Europeans. To make matters worse, and because Arab Christians were protected by European Christian bodies even under the Ottomans. Christian clergy even flaunted their new found protection by ringing church bells and holding public religious processions: these were previously forbidden for centuries under Muslim rule. This led to the greater stability of Muslim-Jewish relations during a period of Muslim-Christian enmity. For example, in 1840, Christians inspired the blood libel (a false accusation which means that Jews have used the blood or even murdered non-Jew children for their religious rituals) against the Jews of Damascus and they even sought to enlist some harsh Muslim mobs in their cause. This came to be known in history as the Damascus affair of 1840, but this wouldn't be the last blood libel instigated by Christians on Ottoman lands. There were anti-Christian riots in Aleppo in 1850 and in Nablus in 1856 (the 1856 riot in Nablus was instigated by the killing of a Muslim by an English missionary). Conversely in 1860, when the Muslims rioted against the Christians in Damascus, it is said that the Jews encouraged them. [1]

The year 1839 would also bring about the Tanzimat, also known as reorganization. It was around this time when the Ottomans sensed that there are more and more Jews migrating to Palestine. Ottoman citizenship was even granted to Ottoman Jews. This was a reformation period which had a desire to reform the social and political foundations of the Ottoman Empire, to emancipate the

dhimmis by giving them more equality and having their integration into Ottoman society. In 1876, the Tanzimat would be replaced overall by the 1876 Constitution of the Ottoman Empire

If we go back a little bit in time, one important thing to note here is that the British never tried to use the treatment of non-Muslims to gain influence in the Ottoman regions. They wanted to play a game of territorial integrity and they would strike when the iron was hot. This way, the British kept political stability in the Ottoman region during their somewhat alliance with the Ottomans. They also provided territorial stability to the Ottoman lands as well, because it resulted in the safety of Ottoman and British routes towards India. Later, this dealing with the British would be one of the reasons why they couldn't help their Muslim brethren against the British in India, even if they wanted to. Another example: in 1831-1833, there was the Egyptian-Ottoman war which resulted in Egyptian victory. In the second Egyptian Ottoman war in 1839, the Ottoman Sultan Mahmood II had made a terrible effort to get Ibrahim Pasha out of Syria. It was only with British and Austrian intervention (majorly British) that kept Ibrahim from marching towards Istanbul and thereby preserving of the Ottoman's integrity or whatever was left of it, because visibly the Ottomans are declining by now.

Palestine and Syria had felt the impact of Ottoman agreements with the Europeans, which opened the Ottoman areas to European trade. The British Ottoman Commercial Convention of 1838 and the Balta Liman Convention of the same year drew the entire region of the Levant (modern day Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) to global trade, but this came at a huge price: regional trade networks lost their autonomy, profit became slimmer, and Ottoman trade became subordinated into the larger worldwide economies. For example, merchants of Nablus were forced to focus their attention on centres of European goods such as Beirut (Lebanon), Jaffa (Palestine, now in Israel), and Haifa (Palestine, now in Israel). [2]

Now, at this point, it's obvious that the Ottomans are at a decline and the main protagonists are about to be Britain, France, and Russia (the Triple Entente). It was a series of British double dealing that started off the entire Palestine-Israel conflict. One thing to note here is that when the French Revolution happened in 1789 which granted equality to all people, Jews were given the opportunity to assimilate into French society and this meant that they would have to give up their commitment to the idea of returning to the Palestinian region (this Promised Land of Palestine, which they called Eretz Israel). The Jews of France chose to assimilate. When an active Zionist movement emerged, its initial support and impulse came from Eastern Europe, where equality and assimilation was nearly impossible at that time. Europe has seen a fair deal of anti-Jew attacks: most notable attacks taking place from 1881-84 in Russia. In the attacks from 1900-14, nearly 1.5 million Jews had left Russia with the majority who went to the USA.

This wasn't seen as a Zionist movement into Palestine because of two reasons:

- (1) The Jews who went to Palestine, didn't go for the sake of colonizing it
- (2) Whoever went for the sake of colonizing it in search of their Promised Land (such as the BILU movement – BILU translated from Hebrew initials in Isaiah 2:5 “Oh house of Jacob, come and let

us go”) found little success in remaining in Palestine and most of them soon left. However, this movement of going to Palestine would have a great influence on the Zionism.

In 1839, 4 months after the death of Sultan Mahmud II, his successor Sultan Abdul Majied issued the Hatti Sharif of Gulhane which guaranteed security of life of every Ottoman subject and the reformation of the justice system. It seemed as if the Ottomans were taking a page out of Western secularism, but nonetheless, gradually these policies would have an impact on the above mentioned anti-Christian riots.

We discussed earlier that French Catholics and Russian Orthodox Christians were allowed to hold a presence in Palestine. This presence would now lead to conflicts between the Catholics and the Orthodox clergy in Palestine. Sparked by such religious rivalries in Palestine came the Crimean War between 1854-1856, where Russia lost to an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, France, and Britain as a result. Later, Russian tsars encouraged Balkan separatist movements to acquire influence in the Ottoman regions and also against Russia's major rival in Europe, Austria-Hungary.



The Crimean War – 1854-1856

Hatti Humayun of 1856 would be adopted as an extension to the Hatti Sharif of 1839, in hopes that equal rights for all would reduce non-Muslim separatist tendencies and would also promote stability and tolerance between people of different faiths in Ottoman areas. It basically proclaimed equality of dhimmis with Muslims. This meant that the dhimmi status of non-Muslims was abolished with an influence of foreign pressure. Another thing to note here is that Ottoman authority was restored in Palestine with better regional security after the Crimean war. Palestine also saw major economic growth at this time. For example, Palestinian cotton production was meeting European demand as well, owing to the loss of American cotton during their civil war. But this cotton success wouldn't last beyond the mid-1870s. More successful was Palestinian citrus fruit cultivation. Orange plantations in Jaffa was quadrupled from 1850-1880. Soap factories in Nablus went from 15 in 1860 to 30 in 1882. From 1880-1914, Jaffa's orchard's areas increased by nearly 7 times with exports increasing by nearly 5 times. The period from 1860-1882 saw much better olive production as well. Tourism and pilgrim traffic to the Holy Land would also increase post 1850s and tourism would be a good source of revenue, especially because people had been coming to visit and identify biblical sites. Negative feelings of Muslims towards foreigners was gradually declining. In 1865, an Ottoman high ranking official, Cevdet Pasha, recalls Muslims not being happy with this secular equality, and also noted that some Greek Christians weren't happy because Greeks, Armenians, and Jews were now placed together as equals under Muslim supremacy, saying: "The government has put us together with the Jews. We were content with the supremacy of Islam." [3]

In 1858 and 1867, the Ottomans introduced land reform laws that would seriously affect their power. It allowed non-Muslims to buy land in Ottoman regions as long as they paid taxes to Ottomans. The application of these policies were inconsistent throughout Palestine and Syria. The Ottomans had opposed resistance from peasants who opposed to imposition of taxes. Officials in Damascus had on occasion destroyed entire villages that had openly defied attempts of revenue collection. Some people were even afraid because they didn't want their sons to be subjects of Ottoman military recruitment once their names appeared on Ottoman tax records.

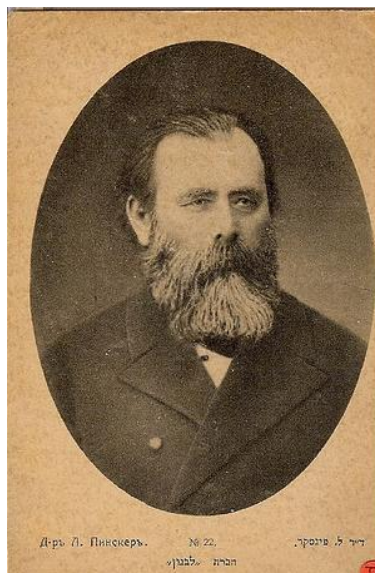
Because acquiring of land was possible and we're seeing a surge of visitors to Palestine, French Catholics started off "the peaceful crusade" in which they visited holy sites in Palestine and donated large sums of money to build religious institutions. German Templars established agricultural colonies with the intent to settle in Palestine and if possible, to make it a Christian land. Protestant missionaries from America and England also came to Palestine. These Protestants sought converts among other sects and encouraged Jewish immigration. Evangelical Christians thought that the end of the world is near, so they sought to bring more Jews into the "Promised Land" and convert them to Christianity so that they and the Jews would receive salvation before the day of judgement. Christian fundamentalists in the USA have similar hopes in their support of Israel. Pro-Israel Christians can be seen using Biblical references (Genesis 12:1-7, Genesis 15:8-21, Genesis 26:1-3, Genesis 28:13, Exodus 23:31, Deuteronomy 19:8-9, Josh 4:18, Numbers 31:1-12, Ezekiel 47:13-20, Psalms 105:8-11, Galatians 3:15-18) to show that the land of Israel belongs

to the Jews and they should have a presence and a God-given right to exist there because God had promised them the land.

Even after that, what happened was that only a few people purchased land. Those who did were tax collectors, families from Jerusalem who didn't previously own land, and wealthy merchants. For example, the Sursuqs (a family of Greek Catholics) owned nearly 57,500 acres of land. Although it wasn't allowed to purchase village lands as per the laws of 1858, but the declining Ottomans wanted revenue. It becomes clear at this point that transformation of landholding, industrial revolution, and agricultural revolution started before Zionist immigrations and Aliyahs even began.

In 1877-1878, there was the Russo-Turkish war in which Russia won and gained European diplomacy at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. This way, the Congress of Berlin awarded independence to Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro and allotted Bosnia & Herzegovina to the Austrians. All of these areas were former Ottoman conquered lands.

In response to the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia, Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) was founded in 1881. In 1881, Yehuda Leib Pinsker published Autoemancipation where he gave the idea that Jews had to acquire territory to escape persecution. However, he wasn't committed to Palestine. The Hovevei Zion disagreed with him on that, but Autoemancipation had its charm, especially among Jews. Pinsker became the leader of the Hovevei Zion in 1883 until his death in 1891. There were nearly 20,000 to 30,000 Russian Jews who migrated to Palestine, nearly 3,000 of them were settled in agricultural enterprises that survived because of wealthy Western Jews such as Moses Montefiore and Baron Edmond de Rothschild.



Y. L. Pinsker, 1821

In 1882, the British invaded Egypt and had annexed it from the Ottoman Empire. It would become one of the centre of British power in the Middle East. Onwards of 1882, extensive Jewish investment and colonization would begin. During this time of colonization, Palestinian per capita in agricultural areas would be lower than that of the colonists because they had access to imported technology. This would also be seen in soap and olive oil manufacturing as well, where Arabs continued the use of traditional methods and exported to regional markets such as Egypt.

Holistically, Palestine was very much stable for Muslims, Jews, and Christians, because for the most part, the people belonging from these religions were living peacefully, with isolated incidents here and there. This would change when the Zionists would emerge and would claim that Palestine was inherently Jewish and should revert to a Jewish state. This particular understanding also comes by some Jewish understandings of scripture. However, many (if not the majority) Jewish and Christian scholars disagree with Zionist readings of scripture. Those who disagree on the Zionist readings believe that it would be the Messiah who would take them to the Promised Land.

During most part of the 19th century, Jews came to Palestine for religious motives. They settled in several cities in Palestine, especially in Jerusalem where they made a majority in 1890. Another town where the Muslims lost their majority was the port of Haifa which expanded greatly from 1850s and onwards.

In 1891, group of Jerusalem notables sent a petition to the central Ottoman government in Istanbul calling for an end to Jewish immigration, and land sales to Jews. Between 1895 and 1914, the Jews who entered Palestine didn't come for religious purposes, but to colonize it. They would use this to establish a base for the future restoration of Palestine as Israel. As Zionists, they were more interested in establishing agricultural colonies than settling in cities. Zionist farmers would gain the upper hand and set aside Palestinian Arabs' traditional agriculture, because Arabs continued to use cattle while the Zionist settlers used advanced farming equipment imported from Europe.

In 1897, the future of Palestine was to be shaped forever when an Austrian assimilated Jew named Theodore Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization at Basel, Switzerland. He would be the founder of modern Zionism. Herzl's thoughts were further catalyzed by the false treason charges and exile of Alfred Dreyfus. He wrote "Der Judenstaat" in 1896 after spending 1891-96 in France. He was one of the most prominent pioneers of Jewish immigration to Palestine. Herzl had met many people to gain political support for Jewish colonization in Palestine, including the Grand Duke of Baden (of Germany) in 1898, and he even became a supporter of him in some diplomatic sense. Herzl sold the Duke the idea that Jewish colonization would benefit Ottoman economy, but Germany wasn't in favor of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. [4]



Theodore Herzl (1860-1904)

At one point in 1902, Herzl was even considering for a temporary basis the Sinai Peninsula near Palestine and in 1903 a land in British controlled East Africa (modern day Kenya) - an idea suggested by Joseph Chamberlain at the 6th Zionist Congress at Basel, to which Herzl was initially against. This was known as the Uganda Scheme. Because of this Eastern European Jews suspected that Herzl being an already assimilated Austrian might abandon the idea of Zionism entirely, but luckily for them Herzl's death in 1904 ensured the failure of these considerations. He didn't live to see the Ugandan scheme being rejected but a day before his death, he told the Reverend William H. Hechler: "Greet Palestine for me. I gave my heart's blood for my people." [5]

Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II attempted a policy against Zionism that shouldn't be forgotten. He never allowed Jewish immigrants to settle in Palestine with official Ottoman consent. On 5th September 1893, Abdulhamid II was warned that the Rothschild family had helped settle many Jewish immigrants in Haifa, but Abdulhamid II simply told his officials to be more precautionous in order to prevent the Jewish presence turns into something even bigger. [6] In 1900, Sultan Abdulhamid II had restricted Jewish visits. However, some Zionist immigration and land purchases were still being done under the table illegally, through bribery (and corruption of Ottoman officials) for public land, and for a hefty amount of money for local Palestinian land. When Theodore Herzl and Abdulhamid II met on 19th May 1901, Herzl started off by praising Abdulhamid II for his treatment of Jews in Ottoman Empire, and he even made a staggering offer to Abdulhamid II, that he would pay the Ottoman Sultan all of the debts of the Ottoman debts in exchange for the execution of his projects in the Ottoman Empire. [7] Herzl didn't mention that the projects required mass Jewish immigration into Palestine, because he didn't want to risk the

dissolution of his projects before they even started, but the Sultan wanted Herzl to prepare a project plan for the consolidation of Ottoman debts. The meeting between Herzl and Abdulhamid II wasn't as hostile as some historians report. Abdulhamid II offered Herzl a cigarette and they smoked together, but the translator in the room, Ibrahim Pasha, wasn't permitted to smoke. [8] Abdulhamid II knew of Zionist objectives in Palestine, but at some point in time later, the Allied Powers managed to pressurize Abdulhamid II into allowing Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine. The second Aliyah (the second wave of Jewish immigration) had started already in 1904 and between 40,000 and 55,000 Jews went to Palestine during his rule and more than 30 colonies were established. [9]



Sultan Abdulhamid II (reigned 1876-1909)

On 27th April 1909, Abdulhamid II was dethroned shortly after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, thus ending or severely deprioritizing whatever official policy the Ottomans could implement against immigration in Palestine. In September 1908, the Foreign Minister Tawfik Pasha and a prominent Young Turk leader Ahmet Riza made announcements favorable to Zionism and wanted to remove bans on any Zionist movements in Palestine [10]. Later after negotiations of Zionist leaders and Zionist rabbis with some Ottoman officials (especially Grand Vizier Hussein Hilmi Pasha), it was declared that hardworking and knowledgeable Jews who would serve the Ottoman government and the state would be allowed to settle in Palestine. Some restrictions on Ottoman Jews would also be waived. [11] In 1915 the Interior Minister Talat Pasha (who was also anti-Zionist) even wrote a confidential letter to the then Palestinian governor demanding to discontinue all land sales in Palestine and to illegalize transfer deeds of lands to all Jews, but the damage was already done and this couldn't become Ottoman policy.

In 1898, a Syrian Christian journal, *al Muqtataf*, warned against Jewish hopes to take control over the Palestinian region. In 1899, Yusuf Diya Al-Khalidi, a prominent Jerusalemite wrote to the chief rabbi of France that although "historically it is your country" but Zionism's implementation would require brute force and Palestine should be "left in peace". Herzl replied by reassuring al-Khalidi that Zionism meant no harm to the Arabs, and their wealth and well-being would increase by Zionist investments. However, Herzl was always of the opinion that Jews should have a land where they would exercise sovereignty and a land unlike Europe where they wouldn't be a minority.

In 1899, the World Zionist Organization formed their own bank and in 1901, Jewish National Fund (JNF) was established with the aim to purchase settlements in Palestine. Lands that would be purchased by the JNF were only Jewish and couldn't be sold to any non-Jew. Land purchases in the Palestinian region was usually done by evading Ottoman law, and also by using foreign consuls and Ottoman Jews sympathetic to their cause. David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister and one of the primary founders of Israel, was a part of the second Aliyah. Ben-Gurion immigrated to Jerusalem in 1906.

By the early 20th century, Muslims had given their allegiance to the Ottomans. Palestinian Christians, especially the Greek orthodox, showed opposition to Zionism because they were now much more aware of their intentions and how they were starting to occupy Palestine. The longevity of Ottomans in Istanbul led the British to recognize the Grand Mufti of Palestine Hajj Amin Al Husseini, leading to resentment among rival families around Jerusalem and other areas. Zionist histories have denigrated him as being highly antisemitic, but recent historians do see him as a person of Palestinian nationalism.

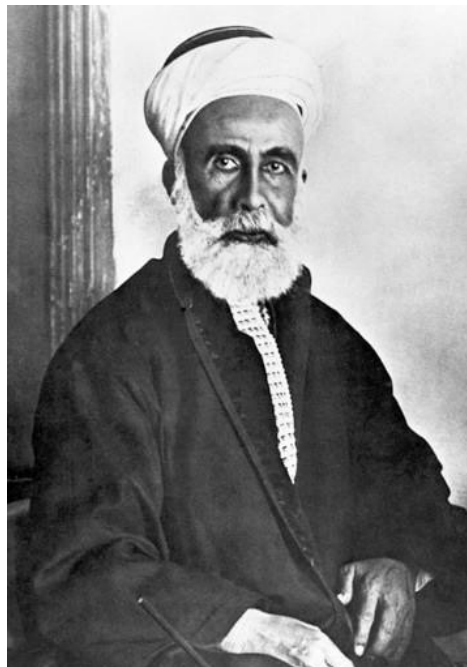
By now, it was becoming evident that Zionism was a Western imperialistic European movement to subordinate the Palestinian subjects to the Europeans. Palestinians (Muslim, Christian and even some Jewish) could see Zionists taking lands which were previously Arab lands. Arab opposition to Zionist immigration and land purchases only began before World War 1, otherwise concerns about Jewish immigration and land purchases existed even before 1897. In 1902, Rashid Rida, a Muslim reformer born in the Beirut vilya but living in Cairo, wrote in his journal *al-Manar* that Jews entering Palestine aren't simply seeking a haven from European persecution, but are seeking sovereignty. This was also echoed by the Lebanese Catholic Nguib Azoury. 1908 to onwards, anti-Zionist sentiment was seen in the presses, and in response, Jews were also submitting pro-Zionist articles to presses with Arab names. Among educated Muslims and Christians in Palestine, Zionism had contributed to a growing sense of their common identity as Palestinians. The society, where before Zionist immigration Palestinian Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived peacefully to the extent of celebrating their religious events together harmoniously, would later turn out to be something very different.

1880 to the 1890s was the German period of military and industrial expansion. The Ottomans were allied with the Germans in their stride against the British, French, and the Russians. The Ottomans

even allowed Germany to build a railroad from Constantinople, Baghdad, Basra, through to the Persian Gulf. Even military support between the Germans and the Turks was bilateral.

In the early 1900s, Britain decided to use diplomacy in Turkey as the basis of their actions in the Middle East. Initially they were disinterested in Palestine, but Palestine would later become a key factor in its wartime calculations and imperial ambitions. Soon, you will come to see that it was the British that caused the Israel-Palestine conflict. This would be clear when we will come to the Balfour Declaration in 1917. The Balfour declaration is a result of British incompetence, double dealing, and false promises leading to give Zionists a home in Palestine.

In February 1914, Sharif Hussein, of the Banu-Hashim clan (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W.), protector of the Makkah and Madinah under Ottoman overlords, sent his son Abdullah Ibn Hussein, to request British aid against the Turks. Lord H. H. Kitchener replied to Abdullah that it will not provide arms to be used against an allied power. But 10 months later when British would declare war against the Turks, the British would inform Sharif Hussein that in return for any assistance that the Arab nation might give to the British, they would defend the Arabs against external aggression and they would also protect Hussein against internal threats. They also promised to support the principle that an Arab of true race might become the caliph of Makkah. By true race, they meant a person who belonged to the bloodline of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). The communication between the British and Hussein would create the basis for a relationship that would last throughout the war.



Sharif Hussein – 1916

Why did the British declare war against the Ottomans?

The Ottomans launched a naval attack on Russian ports on 29th October 1914 on the Black Sea. This was called the Black Sea Raid. There is a complex background around it where the Ottoman War Minister Enver Pasha offered Germany an Ottoman battleship in exchange for German protection. Britain seized that ship and later Germany and the Ottomans became allies. However, this alliance alone did not bring the Ottomans into the World War. The treaty of the Ottoman-German alliance meant that Germany would oppose any foreign attacks on Ottoman lands but it only required that the Ottomans would help Germany in its strides. Some Ottoman officials were against the Ottoman Empire going into the world war (such as Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha and Finance Minister Djavid Bey), because they had already faced defeat in the First Balkan War from October 1912 - 1913, and they were afraid that the Balkans might attack too. But later Ottomans reached agreement of neutrality with Greece and Romania, while Bulgaria seemed pro-German. Enver Pasha would switch his defensive stance to an aggressive stance. He would give Wilhem Anton Souchon the authority to give some military orders. Later the Ottomans and the German led Ottoman battleships under Souchon would attack Russian ports at the Black Sea. Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 1st November 1914. Britain and France declared war on the Ottoman Empire 4 days later.



Enver Pasha

The British wouldn't simply say that they would protect Sharif Hussein from internal and external threats just because he would help them against the Ottomans. There was British interest in the area of Hijaz too. A revolt from Hijaz against the Turks would divert Ottoman troops from their positions that threatened the Suez Canal. British strategy against the Ottoman Empire required a subversion from this area. Nationalism was used and spread among the Arabs for this purpose. Nationalism of the sense that Arabs need to proud of their heritage, especially with their leader Sharif Hussein being a Hashimite. With the increase of hostility between Arabs and the Turks,

nationalism would play a vital role in taking a political shape. Arabs would be tempted to rebel against their Ottoman overlords. The driving force of this idea would come from Sharif Hussein, who believed that he could expand Arab geo-political influence with the help of the British. In return Hussein would want the independence of an Arab nation, whose boundaries are now encompassed by modern day Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

By the end of 1914, the British had made Egypt its protectorate, annexed Cyprus, and had also captured Basra. World War 1 had kicked off in July 1914 and it showed no signs of stopping even at the end of the year and next. In Europe, things looked like a stalemate because Germany was in a deadlock with Britain and France in the West, Russia's war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire also was at a similar point. With this in mind, the British had to think of new ways of winning the World War. The British diplomatic and conspiratorial efforts were targeted towards Turkey's Ottoman Empire.

In January 1915, France and Britain had approved the campaign of Gallipoli. The aim was to break through Istanbul storming the Ottoman defenses guarding the Dardanelles.

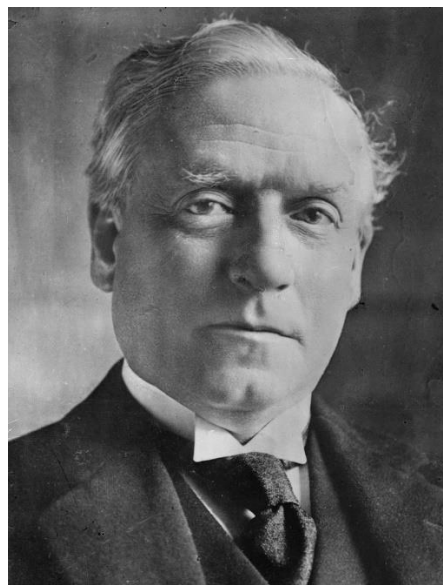


A collection of photographs during Gallipoli

Efforts were made to keep Russia in the war from 1915, because if Russia had been kept out of it, all of Germany's attention would have been diverted towards France and Britain. This would be a key motivation for the Balfour declaration (to be discussed later). The British and the French had suffered defeat in the hands of the central powers in some areas causing worry and to act with urgency in order to save face in the eyes of Arabs. The British even brought soldiers from India to support their war effort (another example of lost battles: Battle of Kut in Mesopotamia from 1915-16). At this point, the Central Powers did have somewhat of an upper hand in Europe at least, and there was hardly any way that Britain, France, and Russia could have won alone without any outside help.

The British hoped that by making a deal about the spoils of war, the alliance of the Allied Powers against the Ottomans, the Germans, and the Austro-Hungarians would be strengthened. In a secret agreement, known as the Constantinople Agreement in March 1915, Britain and France agreed and promised to give Constantinople and the Dardanelles to Russia in the event of the victory of the World War. Constantinople was an area of highly strategic and geopolitical importance to Russia. This was a bizarre move because the British had been previously been resisting Russian efforts to acquire Constantinople. In April 1915, the Britain convinced a pro-German state, Italy, to join the allied forces by bribery and by promising Ottoman lands in Anatolia in the result of the Ottoman defeat.

In June 1915, between British Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith and British diplomat Maurice de Bunsen, the de Bunsen Committee was held to determine British policy towards the Ottoman Empire during and following World War 1. This committee would identify areas in the event of a successful conclusion of the war. The primary identified areas were Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq.



H. H. Asquith

Reiterating the promises held in 1914, Henry McMahon sent a letter to Sharif Hussein stating that British and Arab interests were the same. They exchanged even more letters and their exchange would be remembered as the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, in which the British assured to recognize Arab independence in exchange for an Arab Revolt from Hijaz (the region in Western modern day Saudi Arabia comprising of Makkah, Madina, Tabuk, Jeddah, Yanbu, and Taif) against the Ottomans. This would be a strange proposal because the British office in the Indian subcontinent was backing Sharif Hussein's rival, the family of Ibn Saud. After the World War, a dispute over Palestine would continue.

On 9th Sep 1915, Sharif Hussein was unhappy because it was becoming clear that the British were hesitant in accepting his demands based on the boundaries he wished. Nonetheless, he was still eager for an Arab revolt against the Turks. The British were clearly ignoring Hussein's demands, even though McMahon had promised that he would support Hussein's demands in return of an Arab revolt against the Ottomans. McMahon's letters were plagued with vagueness, ambiguities, and inaccuracies. In short, the British were never committed to giving independence to the Arabs and H. H. Kitchener always referred to the "freedom of the Arabs" from the Turks. For more information, you can take a look at the exchanges of letters between Sharif Hussein and Henry McMahon.

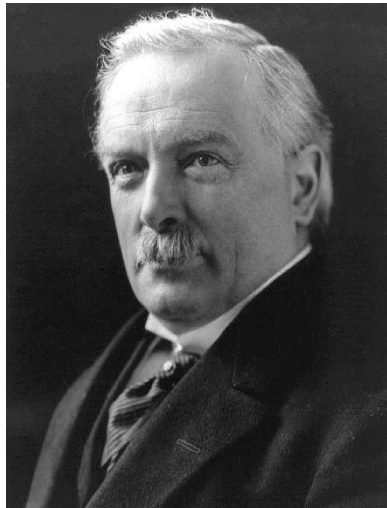
To give even more context to British double dealing, we need to understand the Sykes-Picot agreement. In the spring of 1916, between France's Francois Georges-Picot and Britain's Mark Sykes, a secret agreement, the Sykes-Picot agreement was formulated, again ignoring the demands of Sharif Hussein. This would mark mutually agreed areas of influence in the result of a successful defeat and partition of the Ottomans. British would have Iraq mainly because of its oil, railways, and ports.



Mark Sykes (left) and Francois Georges-Picot (right)

Even though Palestine was marked as an international zone, the British tried to keep Haifa to themselves, so that it could be used as a major port to transport oil and goods from Iraq across the Mediterranean. France would have the areas of Lebanon, Syria and Cilicia. France previously had commercial and religious interests in Syria and Lebanon. The Arabs were either being ignored of their demands or that Britain and France were selling the Arabs short. For British imperial objectives, if they win the war, it was far more important to keep France as a part of the spoils of war than to recognize their promises with due diligence to the Arabs.

At this point, the promises to Sharif Hussein became a means of blocking British obligations to the French and vice versa. Discrepancies between their promises and intents would become even more widened as the war would progress. Britain and France provided false assurances to the Arabs while they would reward Palestine to the Zionists as their national home as a result of the Balfour declaration. The Balfour declaration was a result of British incompetence, double dealing, and false promises. We'll get into more detail about it. Some, including Arthur Balfour himself, wished to hand over authority of Palestine over the USA if nothing worked out. On 6th December 1916, David Lloyd George would become the Prime Minister of Britain, amid a stalemate in the World War on the Western Front and criticism for H. H. Asquith's war efforts which forced him to resign. David Lloyd George had been sympathetic and supportive to the Zionist movement for long.



David Lloyd George

In June 1916, Sharif Hussein and his son Faisal ibn Hussein launched a revolting attack on the Turkish troops. At this point, they were unaware of the secret meetings that the British had arranged and they proclaimed Arab independence. They soon claimed Makkah and Jeddah from the Ottomans and were proceeding towards Madinah and onwards. The Arabs were engaged with the Ottomans in the Hijaz area and the subversion against the Ottomans which the British needed was thus accomplished. Arab revolts were funded largely by the British, commanded by Sharif Hussein's sons, and organized by British advisors most notably by Thomas Edward Lawrence (also known as Lawrence of Arabia).

By now, Mark Sykes had written several statements which promised independence to various Arab leaders which was a clear contradiction to his own plans. By March 1917, British forces had taken Baghdad. The British cabinet had issued a declaration written by Sykes that told Iraqis to look up to Sharif Hussein of Hijaz. It was designed to encourage Iraqi officers under Faisal to look to the British, apparently to ensure collaboration after the war.

By the spring of 1917, British forces had reached Palestine. By this time, the war wasn't going so well in Europe, so British Prime Minister David Lloyd George thought that the war needs another fresh impetus and a different motivational energy. He attempted to sway American intervention into the war by using public opinion for the support for Zionism. This required influencing Jewish people and Jewish elites. Until now, USA remained neutral and under Woodrow Wilson, US didn't want a war. Lloyd George wanted to change that. Strangely enough, by now there was already a headquarters of the Zionists in Berlin, which might have caused fears that this headquarter might be in favor of Germany in the World War, but there was already a rise in antisemitism all of Europe (especially in Eastern Europe) by the end of the 19th century and onwards. So this resulted in the creation of some Hovevei Zion societies in Eastern Europe, especially in Russia. Hovevei Zion would also be responsible to finance immigration and colonization in Palestine.

With regards to immigration and colonization in Palestine, let's go back a little bit in time to introduce a very prominent Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann (27th November 1874 – 9th November 1952). He was a Russian born British biochemist. A prominent and influential celebrity kind of a person inside and outside Zionist circles. He would later become the first President of Israel after its formation. He even made efforts to convince the British to make even more efforts for Zionism, and also that Zionists would support measures of the British in immigrating to Palestine in the event of an Ottoman defeat. Without his efforts, the Balfour Declaration wouldn't have been possible. He convinced British officials that supporting Zionism would bring warfare interests and developments to Britain, and it was through him that the British decided that they should control Palestine, rather than treating it as an international zone.



Chaim Weizmann

Weizmann even exploited religious sentiments in the light of the texts in the Old Testament that Palestine is that the land promised to the Jews and the Jews have a God-given right to occupy that land. Chaim Weizmann even began meeting Mark Sykes in 1916. Sykes, Lloyd George, and Balfour were Zionists partly because of this. The idea was that the more Jews you bring into the Promised Land, the more likely they would be to receive salvation.

With that in mind in 1917, Lloyd George seeing all the global influence of Jews convinced him to use Zionism in their cause in the World War. USA by now had refused to provide a significant amount of troops to the British because of their alliance with the Russians. USA joined the World War and provided millions of soldiers on the Allied Powers' side later.

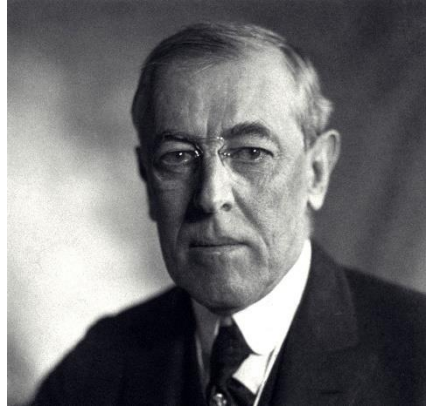
In May 1917, Sykes and Picot went to the Hijaz to discuss the Sykes-Picot Agreement with Sharif Hussein. Sharif Hussein rejected the Sykes-Picot agreement because of French claims to Syria along with Lebanon. Hussein only changed his mind after he received false information that France and Britain would only be advisors in the regions of Arab independence.

In late 1917, the Bolsheviks, under Vladimir Lenin, came to power in Russia through a revolution. This created a concern among Britain and France that Russia might withdraw from the war, causing Germany to focus all its attention towards Britain and France.



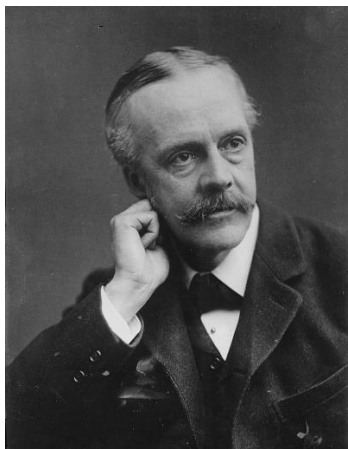
The Bolsheviks in 1920 with Vladimir Lenin (bottom right)

The British and the French couldn't have won the war unless USA and all external support wasn't brought in. On 2nd April 1917, US President Woodrow Wilson asked for a declaration of war against Germany and on 6th of April the US House of Representatives adopted a resolution in favor of a war against Germany. This came because Germany had attacked many US merchant ships and, not to forget that, David Lloyd George had lobbied to increase Zionist support in the USA. The first U.S. infantry troops arrived on the European continent in June 1917; in October, the first American soldiers entered combat, in France. That December, the U.S. declared war against Austria-Hungary.



Woodrow Wilson

Efforts to promote Zionism were now even more enhanced because Zionism would be used as a means to persuade Russian Jews (especially the influential ones) to support Russia's war effort. The Zionists of London encouraged this idea, even though they knew that no such Russian Jewish backing of the war in light of Zionism existed. There were some influential Jews in the Bolshevik party, but most of them were anti-Zionist. The British would support Zionism in relation to the USA as well. All these factors would contribute to the Lloyd George instructing his foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, into writing Balfour declaration in November 1917, just as British forces were occupying Palestine. The creation of the state of Israel required the umbrella and the protection of the British and this was possible because of the Balfour Declaration. Not only that, after the World War, it was also a cause of emerging Jewish nationalism with British support in Palestine too.



Arthur Balfour

On 2nd November 1917, Balfour wrote to Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild expressing British support for Zionism and the creation of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine where “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status of enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

The Balfour Declaration published in November 1917 would capture the hearts of the Jewish people across the globe because it promised a Jewish land in Palestine. Zionist intentions were clear that they wanted Palestine, and no other piece of land. The Balfour Declaration wasn't an agreement or a treaty, but it was a declaration of a Jewish home in Palestine. Just to make it even clearer, during the drafting of the Balfour declaration, Chaim Weizmann made it clear that he supported the draft that declared British support for "the reconstitution of Palestine as a Jewish state and as the National Home of the Jewish people." The draft that mentioned "the reconstitution OF Palestine as a Jewish state" instead of "IN Palestine" was taken because the latter could enable the Arabs in Palestine to control state administration. The Balfour Declaration would be the first time when any European power had given official backing to making Palestine a Jewish homeland. This was against Sharif Hussein's demands because Palestine was a part of his promised deal in Arab independence. Even though the declaration had mentioned that it wouldn't harm the civil and religious rights of any non-Jew in Palestine, the indigenous Palestinians were being more looked as non-Jewish or Jewish rather than as Palestinians. This declaration was to declare a Jewish home in Palestine. Geographically, it seemed that David Lloyd George also saw the control of Palestine to be linked to Britain's imperial interests because it would be a strategic asset in guarding the Suez Canal.

Things were about to take a major embarrassing turn for the British now. Lloyd George had relied on an inaccurate intelligence report for basing his strategy. As I mentioned earlier that most of the influential Jews which were present in the higher ups of the Bolshevik party were anti-Zionist, because they thought that Zionism was a capitalist idea. Lloyd George thought that the Jews in the Bolshevik party would back the British support for Zionism but it was the exact opposite. Russia, under the Bolsheviks and with Leon Trotsky, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, published the secret treaties that were kept away from the press and Sharif Hussein in December 1917. 4 months later Russia pulled out of the war under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and Austria-Hungary. [12]

While the Arab revolts were somehow protecting British interests and armies in Palestine and their revolts were also preoccupying Ottoman and German troops, this embarrassment would mean massive suspicion in the eyes of the Arabs, because it was clear that not only were the British not living up to their promises especially with regards to Palestine, but they were only promising things to the French as well. While the British had captured Jerusalem in December 1917, the British government reassured Arab independence to Sharif Hussein, in a message known as the "Hogarth Message" in January 1918. Hussein took Britain's word of British commitment to Arab independence. David Hogarth, who sent that message, understood that Sharif Hussein wanted Palestine to be reconsidered after post-war peace efforts. At the same time, Hogarth also understood that while he had no problem with Jewish immigration into Arab controlled lands as long as they lived under the Arabs, there was no way Hussein would accept a Jewish state. This was a special message (of 4th January 1918) from the British Government, carried personally by Commander David George Hogarth to Sharif Hussein, stated that "the Entente Powers are determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the

world ... So far as Palestine is concerned, we are determined that no people shall be subject to another". [13]



T.E. Lawrence (left), D.G. Hogarth (center), Lt. Col. Dawnay (right)

As Hogarth himself noted, “the King would not accept an independent Jewish State in Palestine, nor was I instructed to warn him that such a State was contemplated by Great Britain. He probably knows little or nothing of the actual or possible economy of Palestine and his ready assent to Jewish settlement there is not worth very much.” [14] Clearly because the British were never clear about Britain's actual policy with regards to Palestine, and Sharif Hussein's acceptance of such vague information would be his mistake. It should have been obvious by now that McMahon had also misled him in his correspondences. Mark Sykes had also falsely assured Hussein that Zionist immigration wouldn't compromise economic and humanitarian freedoms of the Palestinian Arabs. And why would Sykes do that? Because the British relied on the continuance of Arab revolt against the Ottomans in their war effort.

In December 1917, Jerusalem was liberated completely from Turkish and German commanders, and General Edmund Allenby proclaimed Martial Law and gave a declaration of government in Jerusalem. In a nutshell, it said that the future government of such lands should be based on the consent of the governed. This applied to Southern Palestine, because Northern Palestine was still under Ottoman domination, even though that domination was very weak.



Out of respect for the holy city of Jerusalem, General Edmund Allenby and his forces dismount and enter on foot, 11th December 1917

Seeing this entire situation as opportunity, Weizmann and International Zionist Commission traveled to Palestine again in April 1918 to lay the foundation of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem seeing this as an intellectual hub of Zionism. Weizmann's visit rung alarm bells among the British. Before this, he also met with Palestinian notables and with Faisal, where he assured them that Zionists don't intend to create a Jewish government: clearly another blatant lie. He had to lie because the British weren't ready for any large scale Arab fears, protests, unrest, or retaliation after the British and Zionists had come so far.

Until now the British were relying on Arab forces against the Ottomans in Arab lands. In October 1918, British forces entered Damascus with their ally Faisal's Northern Army, and they had pushed the Ottoman troops north into Syria. On the 3rd of October, Faisal's victory was celebrated in a parade so that he could be seen by the Arabs as their liberator from the Ottomans. The British, under General Edmund Allenby, warned Faisal that his rule might be limited. This was because the British had promised the area to the French already by ignoring his father's demands that were made long ago. Faisal, after assuming the title of the governor of Damascus, with the support of his father started off with his goal for an independent Arab state.

On 31st October 1918, the Ottomans were defeated. On 11th November 1918, the World War 1 came to an end. When the war concluded in November 1918, with a victory for the Allies, more than 2 million US troops had served at the Western Front in Europe, and more than 50,000 of them died. Now was the time for Britain to honor its promises but things didn't end.

US President Woodrow Wilson envisioned a world with national self-determination for the people that were ruled by former empires such as the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, but the Britain and France ignored his vision. Britain and France were now free to act upon their visions of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Britain, France, USA, and Italy (the Big Four) would now impose their terms in a series of treaties at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, including especially the Treaty of Versailles. Britain and France proceeded to take control according to the Sykes-Picot agreement. In December 1918, they modified Sykes-Picot to remove Russia from a role in Palestine, because previously it was marked as an international zone. Palestine would later be taken over by Britain. [15]

In January 1919 at the eve of the Paris Peace Conference, Weizmann hoped to gain Faisal's recognition of Zionist aims in Palestine in return of Weizmann's support of Faisal against the French. This would result in the Faisal-Weizmann agreement where Faisal would support Zionist immigration to Palestine unless he gained an independent Arab state in Syria. Also, as a part of the agreement, "Muhammeden Holy Places shall be under Muhammeden control". No Palestinian Arab view was consulted for this agreement.



Weizmann and Faisal in 1918 in Transjordan

The British would later abandon Faisal entirely, but the mere happening of this agreement gave further Zionist impetus to their right to Palestine. British interests would never come to fruition especially with their promises to France if they had not abandoned Faisal. Given Article IX of the Faisal-Weizmann agreement, which stated "Any matter of dispute which may arise between the contracting parties shall be referred to the British Government for arbitration", this should have been enough to speculate that British interests were at hand, but maybe Faisal didn't see thing broader scope of things.

In a memo after the Versailles Peace Agreement, Balfour was clearly expressive about his colonialist views in light of the promises to the Zionists regardless of whether it was right or wrong. At the end of the Versailles Peace Treaty in June 1919 with the formation of the League of Nations, they agreed that the defeated areas of the Ottoman empires should be administered by mandates. This meant that Britain and France could officially impose their rule on Arab territories. [16]

In July 1919, British support of Zionist claims to Palestine was rejected by the General Syrian Congress. This caused Faisal to deny the Faisal-Weizmann agreement of January 1919. By the first half of 1919, even Arthur Balfour seemingly made it clear that British double dealing and false promises were going on and they might have been bought into the Biblical narrative, so that they could deny Arab demands in favor of Jewish proposals, indicating that the Jews have a historic right to that land.

With the USA, under Woodrow Wilson envisioning self-determination with the will of the inhabitants of Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, Britain and France attempted to block any delegation from going into the Middle East. Later somehow, American convoys designated the King-Crane Commission. The commission interviewed Arabs and Jews in Palestine also inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon. It concluded that one Arab state of Greater Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine, should be created with Faisal as its king, with the USA as the mandatory power; the second choice would be Britain. The majority of the commission favored a drastic cut down of the Zionist program, limiting it to simply an expanded Jewish community in the Middle East and that too within an independent Arab state. These findings were the reason that the King-Crane Commission was submitted to the Peace Conference in 1919, but wasn't published. All of Woodrow Wilson's words would prove futile, and there was already no US pressure to counter the desires of Britain and France at the League of Nations. The British couldn't possibly reconcile Arab independence with the interests of Britain and France. In Balfour's view: Palestine was a "unique situation" in which ... " we are dealing not with the wishes of an existing community but are consciously seeking to reconstitute a new community and definitely building for a numerical majority in the future." Palestinians to the British became irrelevant. On 21st October 1919, France began their imposition on Syria and Lebanon. The British had fulfilled their wartime promise to the French. But what about the Arabs? Their independence and unity was denied.

After World War 1, Sharif Hussein refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, in protest of the Balfour Declaration and establishments of the British and French mandates in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. The Balfour declaration had been incorporated into the British mandate as it was decided in Versailles. Palestine was now open for Jewish immigration. Chaim Weizmann and other Zionist groups financed land purchases and building settlements for new Jewish immigrants. Political and security bodies were now being developed to support an emerging Jewish homeland. Sharif Hussein later refused to sign the Anglo-Hashemite Treaty and thus deprived himself of British support when his kingdom was invaded by the Ibn Saud's. The Ibn Saud's would end up conquering the entire Arabian Peninsula. Abdulaziz Ibn Saud defeated Sharif Hussein in 1924, and Hussein would be forced to escape to Amman, Transjordan, where his son Abdullah was the Emir (It's worth noting that Zionists consider even Transjordan to be a part of their Promised Land). Because Hussein would proclaim himself as a "caliph" 2 days after the Turkish Caliphate was abolished on 3rd March 1924, and he would act as if he was the king of the Arabs, Abdullah would send his own father to live in Aqaba (Jordan). [17] Later, he would be exiled from Aqaba to Cyprus (British controlled), where he would live with his son, Zaid. In 1930, Hussein received a stroke and was re-invited to Amman where he stayed until his death in 1931. [18]

By now, the Palestinians had already realized that they were being excluded from the grand scheme of things, especially in the aims of the Zionists. They seemed to be against every progress made by the British. Their enmity with the British had turned out violent during the pogrom which took place from the 4th - 8th April 1920. 9 people died, 5 of them were Jews, and 244 people were injured and 211 of these were Jews. This resulted in a much more harder and renewed commitment to Zionism at the San Remo Conference at the end of April. The Balfour declaration of 1917 was adopted and the British mandate for Palestine was initially constructed. Another great step ahead in the Zionist cause. But there were some British officials who were anti-Zionist. E.g. Lord Curzon, also the Viceroy of India from 1899 – 1905.

Lord Curzon's proof of being anti-Zionist lies in denying preferential treatment to Jews and Zionists when a clause was deleted in the draft of the British Mandate for Palestine in October 1920. Weizmann asked Curzon and Lloyd George for that clause to be reinstated but Curzon wasn't convinced by the Zionist argument. He was a foreign secretary at this time. In a letter to Lloyd George, Curzon declared: "What they really want this particular clause in the Mandate for is, not in order to get money now, but in order that this sentence may be the foundation on which, at every stage, they may hold a claim for preferential treatment in Palestine, and ultimately for the complete government of the country."

In a memorandum to the Cabinet Balfour supported the Zionist view, and Weizmann's submissions received the approval of Lloyd George. [19]

Faisal had been the governor of Damascus now for 16 months was gradually consolidating his position. When he was proclaimed King by the Syrian National Congress, the French were enraged and General Henri Gouraud sent his troops to take control where Faisal was defeated on 24th July 1920. In August 1920, Faisal was expelled from Syria and fled to Palestine. France had taken up the mandate for Syria and Lebanon. The British had taken up the mandate for Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and Iraq. British rule was rejected by the Iraqis. In August 1920, five days after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, Curzon asked the British protectorate in Cairo get Hussein's signature on the Treaty of Sèvres and Treaty of Versailles and Hussein would receive £30,000 conditional on signature. Hussein declined. In 1921, he stated that he could not be expected to "affix his name to a document assigning Palestine to the Zionists and Syria to foreigners." [20]

In March 1921's Cairo conference, In March 1921, at the Cairo Conference, the British decided that Faisal was a good candidate for ruling the British Mandate of Iraq because of his apparent conciliatory attitude towards the Great Powers and based on the advice from T. E. Lawrence. Following unrests in the Iraqi region, Faisal was established as King of Iraq on 23rd August 1921. The conference also decided that Sharif Hussein's other son, Abdullah ibn Hussein, was to administer Transjordan.

In 1921, the post for the Grand Mufti of Palestine would become vacant and the Palestinians demanded some representation. Hajj Amin Al Husseini was one of the contenders for this position but he would lose the general election to Sheikh Hisam ad-Din. At this time, Husseini was in his

twenties and inexperienced as compared to Hisam ad-Din. The Hajji's family was a very prominent and powerful family in Palestine, and seeing that the results didn't go in their favor. Ernest T. Richmond, an anti-Zionist and an advisor to the Commissioner for Muslim Affairs in Palestine, persuaded Governor Herbert Samuel to stand down and put Hajj Amin Al Husseini in his place. Herbert Samuel followed his advice. Husseini's policy would have an impact on the people of Palestine. Husseini would later see Adolf Hitler as an ally and this would further discredit Husseini and the cause of the Palestinians. The photo of him and Hitler has been shared by many Zionist supporters and Islamophobes as an argument to convince themselves that the creation of a state of Israel was necessary. However, Hitler had ran propaganda and appeasement just to get Muslims to enter World War 2, and he managed to convince many Muslims to side with him too. However, these Muslims were in a minority and for the majority of Muslims, they were on the anti-German side in World War 2.



Hajj Amin Al Husseini

'Zionist and Israeli leaders, however, have exploited the Mufti's activities to denigrate the Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation as in fact Nazi inspired from the beginning and thus as fundamentally antisemitic. The latest example for these efforts is Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman's circulating a photograph of a meeting between the Mufti and Adolf Hitler in Berlin in 1941 in order to provide a convincing argument why Israel had the right to expand building activities in East Jerusalem.' [21]

In May 1921, the Jewish Communist Party distributed flyers calling for the end of British rule in Palestine but to establish a Soviet Palestine. This caused riots among the Communist and socialist Jews, starting in Tel Aviv. Muslims and Christians even helped the police against the Jews. But the disturbance was spreading fast. But they later spread to Jaffa. From 1919-21, nearly 18,000 Jews had entered Palestine (as a part of the third Aliyah), at a time when there was already a growing Arab-Jewish hatred. In the riots, 48 Arabs and 47 Jews were killed and 73 Arabs and 146 Jews were injured. In response, Britain halted Jewish immigration to Palestine.

The British mandate for Palestine was still in place. It was awarded to the British in April 1920, but it wasn't until July 1922 that the mandate was ratified by the League of Nations.

The Palestinians didn't always react violently. From 1921-28, there was no significant Arab violence instigated against the Jews. In fact, 1924-1925 showed Palestine and Palestinians to be far more welcoming to Jews. In 1924, USA closed its doors to Jewish immigrants, and now thousands of Jews would resort to Palestine for asylum, especially when later they would flee Hitler's regime. 1925 saw a massive influx of Jews into Palestine, mainly from Poland. The Palestinians did not revolt or protest even now, even though this was the fourth Aliyah. This made Tel Aviv a much more populated city than before. Also in 1925, Arthur Balfour came to Palestine to preside over the official opening of the Hebrew University, provoking the Arabs and the Palestinians even more.

In 1923, Herbert Samuel tried to plan a Legislative Council for Palestine that would bring incorporate different segments of the community. He also sought Arab agreement for such a council the same way he did for the Zionist Executive. The difference being that the Arab agency would be selected by the British high commissioner and the Zionist Executive was self-selecting. This was bound to fail because it limited Arab voice for concerns and Arab representation in Palestine. The Arabs refused to participate or even cooperating with them. No Arab views were put on the table. This allowed Zionists to proceed as per their wishes, in a risky move. This would prove to be a bad move for the Arabs because in the 1930s, when the Arabs would be finally be willing to cooperate and participate, Zionists opposition would be stronger. A concern here would be that if Arabs would have done so, they would have recognized the British mandate for Palestine and the Balfour Declaration. This would also mean that the Arabs would also recognize the Jewish liberty to immigrate to Palestine.

On 27th May 1927, Abdulaziz Bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud signed the Treaty of Jeddah which recognized the independence of Ibn Saud and sovereignty over Hijaz and Najd. This area would come to be known as Saudi Arabia in 1932. Abdulaziz's relations with the British is worth noting. At first, the British government refused to provide Abdulaziz protection. In 1914, he made an agreement with the Ottomans that he would be the governor of Najd, but due to the outbreak of the World War, his agreement would never see the light of day. However, the British would later develop some diplomatic relations with Abdulaziz. [22] In December 1915, Abdulaziz Al Saud and Percy Cox of the British Indian Army Office would sign the Treaty of Darin, and it would make the House of Saud a British protectorate and would outline the boundaries of a Saudi state. The Treaty of Jeddah was an extension of the Treaty of Darin. On 23rd November 1916, Percy Cox would award the Star of India award and the Order of the British Empire award to Abdulaziz in the Three Leaders Conference held in Kuwait. [23]



King Abdulaziz ibn Saud

In 1929, there were further pogroms in Palestine. In August 1929, in a longstanding issue pertaining to the access to the Wailing Wall. Some Zionist leaders, including Weizmann in 1919, suggested to buy the wall from the Maghrebi waqf. Colonel Frederick Kisch of the Palestine Zionist Executive suggested to force the Moroccans living near the wall out of their homes and destroying their buildings in an act that would have a great political effect. Palestinian Muslims saw Jewish attempts to buy the wall as an example of Zionist attempts to take control over Palestine gradually (as if it weren't obvious enough by now). Hajj Amin Al Hussein sought financial help from other Muslim countries. By December 1928, Weizmann had collected 61,000 GBP to buy the wall. Jews demanded that the wall be turned over to them, but Al-Aqsa has always been sacred to the Muslims too and the Wailing Wall came in the outer perimeter of the Haram al-Sharif. Weizmann suggested to "pour Jews into Palestine" so that Jewish sovereignty would be established, the issue of the wall could be resolved, and gaining control over Palestine would be easier.

In July 1929, Mufti Hajj Amin Al Hussein resumed building activity around the wall. In August, demonstrations by Jews and Muslims continued. On the 23rd August 1929, rumors had spread among the Muslims that Jews were planning an attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque. The Mufti tried to calm the Arabs but they accused him of betraying Islam. Thus, the Arabs began attacks on Jews in Jerusalem, but later the attacks moved to other towns, such as Hebron and Safed. 133 Jews had been killed by the Arabs and 339 were injured. In response to this aggression, British police had killed 116 Arabs and injured 232. It is said that the Arab number of casualties and injuries could be higher. Prominent Arab figures in Palestine accused the Palestine police of exclusively firing at Arab rioters and not Jewish ones. Zionism was becoming a more powerful movement and the Arabs were now seen as untrustworthy people. After the riots, 174 Arabs and 109 Jews were charged with murder or attempted murder; around 40% of Arabs and 3% of Jews were subsequently convicted. During the riots, 17 Jewish communities were evacuated.

Between 1932-1939, given the persecution of Jews all over Europe especially in Eastern Europe and in Nazi Germany, nearly 250,000 Jews had entered Palestine. 1936-1939 saw the Great

Palestinian Revolt by Palestinian Arabs demanding Arab independence, an end to the British mandate for Palestine, and an end to open Jewish immigration to Palestine. This caused the deaths of more than 19,000 Arabs, however British figures covering the event say that 2,000 Arabs were killed. The British had even cooperated with Jewish paramilitary organization, Haganah, who were also previously supporting British efforts to suppress any form of Arab uprising.



Jewish immigration to Palestine

The Haganah were formed as a fully functional defence force after the 1939 Arab revolts in Palestine, but it was formed as a result of the 1920-21 Arab riots by Jewish leaders who believed that they can't simply rely on the British for to protect Jewish farms and the kibbutzim (the agriculture based community of Jews).

British cooperation with the Haganah proved that the Zionists and the British were standing shoulder to shoulder. On top of all this, the British published the White Paper of 1939, which called for the establishment of a Jewish state within the next 10 years, rejecting the 1937 Peel Commission's idea of partitioning Palestine, limiting Jewish immigration to 75,000 for the next 5 years, limiting land purchases for the Jews, and denied all Arab proposals. This paper was rejected by Zionists in a series of demonstrations, attacks, and uprising by the Jews in Palestine. After the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, David Ben-Gurion declared, "We will fight the White Paper as if there is no war, and fight the war as if there is no White Paper." This was because the White Paper had meant that the British would withdraw a great deal of commitment to a Jewish national home in Palestine, and Zionist claims to control of Palestine would be exceedingly limited.

Now Zionists were finding more ways to get rid of the British and take the land for themselves. Illegal Zionist immigration would carry on regardless. The Provisional Council of Israel's first constitutional act would deny anything that came out of the White Paper of 1939 later though.

Britain hoped that the limited power it gave to the Arabs in the case of Iraq would suffice the demands of Sharif Hussein, but the Sharif expected a lot more, because his demand from the British was always to gain independence in Iraq and Syria, and not just in Arabia. He simply wanted the British promises fulfilled.



Modern day Palestine and Israel highlighted

His other son, Abdullah, later became King of Transjordan. He was Emir of Transjordan from 11th April 1921 to 25th May 1946 under a British protectorate, and was king of an independent Jordanian nation from 25th May 1946 until his assassination. But Sharif Hussein would lose all British protection when his kingdom was being taken over by the family of Ibn Saud in 1925, ending the 700 year Hashimite rule in Hijaz. Sharif Hussein's relationship with the British would deteriorate gradually. By September 1918, the British were spending 220,000 pounds per month to financially support the Arab revolt against the Ottomans, and it's been estimated that 6.5 million pounds were given as a subsidy to Sharif Hussein's government between 1916 and April 1919. The subsidies were gradually reduced to GBP 75,000 in October 1919, to GBP 50,000 in 1919, to GBP 25,000 in December until February 1920 after which no subsidies were paid by Britain to Hussein. [24] Ronald Storrs, an official in the British Foreign and Colonial office, estimated that the total cost of the Arab revolt to Britain amount to GBP 11 million in gold.

This entire scenario in the eyes of Palestinians meant that their community being given away to a population that was European minority that was scattered all over the Palestinian region and never had anything to do with the Middle East. Palestinians couldn't accept that. Palestine used to be a land where Christians and Jews lived peacefully with a Muslim majority of hundreds of years. For the Zionist Jews and other Jews as well, it was a fulfillment of historic rights and for Arabs and indigenous Palestinians, it was an increasing alien population. This led to violence in Palestine

from both Arabs and Jews. A protest or demonstration from Palestinian Arabs towards the Jews led to Jewish violence and even terrorism against the Palestinian Arabs. They had the backing of the British in most cases as well. One thing to remember is that in 1944, the One Million Plan became official policy of the Zionist leadership. This was a plan to bring one million Jews or more into the Promised Land from Europe, Middle East, and North Africa. This was against British immigration policy but it couldn't be possible without the withdrawal of British forces and the establishment of the state of Israel.

In October 1945, armed clashes with British personnel began, and even David Ben-Gurion believed that military operations would be necessary to force the British from Palestine. Zionist militants of Haganah (in acts of sabotage), Lehi, and Irgun attacked British soldiers, ships, bridges, and policemen. They even attacked buildings. Arabs weren't spared in the attacks either. Zionist terrorism was showing its result. These attacks only stopped when Chaim Weizmann called for it to stop. At the World Zionist Congress of 1946 in Basel, Switzerland, Weizmann was defeated by activists led by David Ben-Gurion. It's strange because he wanted to negotiate with the British at a time when violence seemed to be an inevitable way to gain a Jewish state. Zionists could see their Jewish state become true now.

A fact to note here is that the members of the Irgun and Haganah became members of the Israeli army, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), after the establishment of the state of Israel. Lehi, however, would be declared as a terrorist organization in Israel on 20th September 1948 after it assassinated Swedish diplomat and United Nations Security Council mediator, Folke Bernadotte while he was on his official duty on 17th September 1948. Lehi was also responsible for other killings as well and they did not have a positive reputation.

How did Zionism become so heavily militarized?

At this point, it's very justified to ask how so many factors going into the favor of Zionism took such a bloody turn. You might suspect that killing as many non-Jews and driving them out of Eretz Israel was always a part of their plan of colonizing their Promised Land. The truth is quite complicated.

Now is the time to introduce the Russian Zionist writer, Vladimir Jabotinsky: who was more responsible than anyone else in militarizing the Zionist movement, with little to no condemnation. He joined the World Zionist Organization in 1921 but resigned two years later as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution. His anti-communist views would soon play into his fascism.

The Zionists had planned to colonize Palestine by immigration and land purchases for the most part, but Jabotinsky wanted the presence of a Jewish militia that would get rid of the British imperialist presence in Palestine and to take the Promised Land by military force.

In 1923, Vladimir Jabotinsky founded the Union of Zionist Revisionists. He argued that Zionist militarization is the natural defence of a people that had no homeland faced with extinction. According to him "If this is militarism, we ought to be proud of it." [25] He had no intention of

keeping Zionism peaceful and he wanted to instill the idea that Zionism can be carried out as a crusading movement with pride. Many who joined his organization were people who had some background in military service too. Unlike other Zionists, he was far more brutally honest in his Zionism than others. He wrote in 1923: Jabotinsky wrote in 1923: “Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonized. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of ‘Palestine’ into the ‘Land of Israel.’”



Vladimir Jabotinsky

In his view, the future of Israel and the state that was about to be formed needed an army strong enough that they could battle all of their opponents and the Palestinians would comply with them by hook or by crook. Jabotinsky trained the volunteers on the Mount of Olives, and the British could not stop him. The Haganah would become more skilled under Jabotinsky.

Given his defiant methods and fascist views, Jabotinsky would not be liked by other Zionists and Jews much. He was even denounced by Ben-Gurion as ‘Vladimir Hitler’. Regardless of whether or not it was liked by other Zionists, there is no doubt in the fact that all of his methods would play a significant role in the creation of the state of Israel.

“Development needs evictions”, said Joseph Weitz, a director of the Jewish National Fund. This meant evicting Palestinian Arabs even if they had been living there for generations and paving the way for Jewish settlements in the land.

Weizmann may seem by now like a more nonviolent Zionist, but as his diary suggests, he wanted the British and the Americans to pressurize Palestinians into leaving their Promised Land otherwise, the Zionists should be prepared to carry out the evictions themselves. [26]

In 1942, Menachem Begin, the Prime Minister of Israel from 1977 to 1983, arrived in Palestine after suffering antisemitism in Poland and Russia. In 1935, somewhere around the time of graduating from the University of Warsaw, he had become a disciple of Jabotinsky and was a very

active member of the youth wing of Revisionist Zionism, Betar. [27] He had lost his entire family in the events of the Holocaust in Brest Litovsk and he was one of the fewest Jews to have survived Germany, Poland, and Stalin's NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs). Coming from a family of merchants and religious rabbis, Eretz Israel became increasingly important to him, and given the anti-Jewish history he had to go through, violence his violence and longing for revenge could be visible. In December 1942, he had joined the Irgun and before the creation of the state of Israel, he was one of their leading members.



NKVD mugshots of Menachem Begin

Onwards of 1943, Irgun had carried out terrorist activities where British and Arabs both were killed. Lehi would be involved in acts of terrorism too. The military acts of Irgun and Lehi showed desperation of these Zionists to get take their Promised Land by any means necessary. Appalled from these activities, Ben-Gurion and Haganah campaigned to capture and hand over the members to the British. But the violence saw no end. Lehi's founder, Avraham Stern was killed in 1942, but Yitzhak Shamir, the Prime Minister of Israel who would serve two terms between 1983 and 1992, would continue his gang's effort.

On June 29, 1946, raided the building of Jewish Agency under Operation Agatha by 17,000 British troops, arresting more than 2,700 Zionists. Among them was Moshe Sharett, the second prime minister of Israel from 1955-56. This had virtually ended the war between the Haganah against the Lehi and Irgun, but the victory was short lived. An angered Begin had Irgun make a retaliatory attack on King David Hotel which killed 91 people of different nationalities and injuring 46.

In 1947, the British would arrest even more Jewish terrorists. When the British had executed three Jewish terrorists, Begin responded by killing two British sergeants, resulting in a few anti-Jewish attacks in Britain. While Irgun and Lehi would be principally responsible for the Deir Yassin massacre later in April 1948, Irgun and Lehi hadn't been too focused on attacking Arabs by now. It could have been because of the nonaggression pact that was signed between Deir Yassin and the Jewish suburb or Givat Shaul in 1947. Their main goal was to remove British presence from

Palestine. However, the nonaggression pact would be broken when a riot broke out between Arabs and Jews in nearby areas. With the aim to improve Jewish morale, the Irgun and Lehi avenged their fallen Jewish brethren.

At the end of 1946, 1.269 million Arabs and 608,000 Jews were residing in Palestine. Jews owned approximately 20% of the cultivated land and over 6% of the total Palestinian land. Zionists began to believe in the dream of a Jewish state almost being fulfilled also in the light of the Holocaust which gave the Zionists even more justification for their cause to immigrate more Jews into the Promised Land. Attacks on anyone hostile or having a feeling of disliking to the Jews became even more intensified, including the British and judges. Britain was becoming increasingly affected regularly by the actions of the Zionists that they didn't even wait for the debate for the UN Partition Plan of Palestine that was scheduled for 29th November 1947. On 26th September 1947, Britain announced that it would withdraw from Palestine by mid-May of the next year, ending the mandate there and then.

On 29th November 1947, the United Nations adopted a partition plan for Palestine. The resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem. It tried to address the issues of the two competing movements of Zionism and Palestinian people's right for self-determination. This was a huge accomplishment for Zionism because now the Jewish right for a home in Palestine had international recognition. But the 1947-48 civil war in Palestine broke out between Jewish and Arab communities soon after the adoption of the resolution, which meant that the UN partition plan's implementation was little to none. The weird part about this war is that the British in their mandate obligated the security upon themselves until the end of their mandate for Palestine, but they hardly intervened during this period, and instead organized their withdrawal from Palestine. The British seldom intervened but even during those times, it seemed like the British intervention favored the Zionists.

1947 and onwards was the Palestine war, where Palestine would finally see its future in the hands of the Jews. The war had two main phases. The first being the 1947–48 civil war in Palestine, which began on 30th November 1947, a day after the United Nations voted to divide the territory of Palestine into Jewish and Arab sovereign states, and an international Jerusalem (UN Resolution 181), which the Jewish leadership accepted, and the Palestinian Arab leaders, as well as the Arab states, unanimously opposed. This phase of the war is described by historians as a civil war (or an intercommunal war), as it was fought mainly between Jewish and Palestinian Arab militias. During this period the British still maintained a weakening rule over Palestine and occasionally intervened in the violence. Irgun and Lehi were primarily responsible for the Deir Yassin massacre on 9th April 1948, where at least 107 Palestinian Arabs were killed, including women and children. From 25th to 27th April 1948, Irgun bombarded the town of Jaffa with nearly 20 tons of high explosive. The Haganah would launch Operation Hametz, around this time, in which they captured villages and towns in and around Jaffa. In this operation, the Irgun fought an armed battle directly with the British. The Irgun won in their encounter. Jaffa was completely conquered on 13th May 1948. This created fear in the residents of the area and the British.

Menachem Begin would praise the taking of Deir Yassin as a “splendid act of conquest” and according to himself, it was a great service to the state of Israel because it got rid of the Arabs. He, as the leader of Irgun at the time, would write in a note to his commanders: “Tell the soldiers: you have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue thus until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest.” [28]

The Deir Yassin massacre along with other attacks in Palestine angered Arabs all over the Middle East. The Arab invasion began on 14th May 1948 by Abdullah (the son of Sharif Hussein), the Emir of Transjordan, opening the door to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. It would later result in the victory of Israel.

Israeli explanation to the Deir Yassin massacre is that Palestinian Arabs were called to return and stay but they chose not to. Palestinian refugees claim that they fled because of cruelty from Irgun and Lehi. Palestinians have also claimed that Israeli soldiers have rounded up Palestinians from Arab villages and shot them. Many Palestinians stayed until they were forced out of their homes and sent outside the new Israeli border.

On 14th May 1948, the British had scheduled to withdraw all its claims to Palestine and the last remaining troops and personnel would depart from Haifa. Against the British mandate, the state of Israel came into being on 15th May 1948. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, would read the Israeli declaration of independence at Tel Aviv Museum (known today as Independence Hall).



David Ben-Gurion proclaiming the independence of the state of Israel beneath Herzl's portrait

700,000 - 900,000 Palestinian Arabs were expelled from their homes as a result of Zionist aggression (especially from Lehi and Irgun) which also included destruction of hundreds of Arab villages in Palestine too, and this is remembered as the Nakba (nearly 250,000-300,000 Palestinian Arabs were expelled before the declaration of Israeli independence). The British mandate was annulled on midnight. Since then, many Jews have emigrated from their former countries to Israel, because simply being a Jew can still make you eligible for Israeli citizenship.

The Palestinian Arabs had it the worst. During the war with the Arab states, Israel captured many more Arab lands. Of the 860,000 Arabs who lived in Palestine of what is now Israel, 133,000 remained. Of the rest, 470,000 entered camps in Arab Palestine, controlled by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip, held by Egypt. The rest fled to Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Egypt and Iraq taking fewer refugees than the others. The question of Palestinian refugees and the national movement for Palestine was to be undermined as a pawn of the Arab state rivalries. This was until the 1960s. Hajj Amin Al-Husseini made efforts to make Gaza the centre of all Arab government in Palestine, but this was rejected by Abdullah, who saw it as a means to deny him any authority over Eastern Palestine. In December 1948, Abdullah proclaimed Arab unity in Palestine and appointed Hajj's old rival, Raghib al-Nashashibi as his first military governor of Palestine, which is now the West Bank of Jordan.

The communal hatred, violence, and divide all came as a result of British strategy of incompetence, double dealing, and false promises to win the First World War. The British causing the entire Palestine-Israel conflict was to have major implications in history.

According to the Anglo-Palestine Yearbook 1947-8 (London: Anglo-Palestine Publications, 1948, p. 33), In 1931, Palestine had 174,606 Jews in a total population of 1,033,314. In 1946, the total population was 1,366,692 which included 384,078 Jews. Up until the few weeks before the establishment of the state of Israel, there was only an Arab majority in Palestine.

Where are we now?

Now the escalation has turned to such a huge extent that the Zionist government of Israel can target civilians, children, women, schools, and even journalists just so they can claim their Promised Land back by whichever illegal means they can. The USA sends billions of tax dollars every year to Israel so that it "could defend itself". Palestine hasn't been recognized as a country yet, and it bid for full UN membership in 2019, despite the US veto at the UNSC. [29]

There is no formal army of the Palestinians, Hamas and the Palestinian Liberation Organization were established in retaliation of Israeli occupation by Palestinians who managed to acquire arms in their self defence against Israeli oppression. Media coverage from Israel's allies has been extremely biased as they refuse to show Israel's actions of oppression and persecution but they won't even take a minute to show that Hamas fired a rocket at Israel. It's important to remember that Hamas didn't exist when the First Intifada took place.

Israel already has a \$2 billion worth Iron Dome anti-missile defence system given by the USA, which intercepts more than 90% of the rockets fired at them. Military aid doesn't only come from the USA. UK has been providing Israel with military aid and weapons deals for a very long time. Only in 2017 alone, the UK issued GBP 221 million worth of arms licenses to defence companies in Israel. [30] Nearly GBP 400 million of arms sales has been approved by the UK to Israel since 2015. These licenses include small arms, ammunitions, missiles, weapon sights, gun mounts, sniper rifles, assault rifles, grenades, and anti-riot shields. While the question of approving weapon sales to Israel is being questioned in parliaments (such as that in UK), every stance and action of Israel is backed by its "right to self-defence" all the while Israel targets innocent Palestinians and the narrative Israel creates is that Hamas and other terrorists hide behind these civilians to cause harm to Israel.

Other than USA and UK, Israel's allies also include Brazil, Mexico, Ethiopia, India, Canada, and Australia. The Palestinians recognized Israel's right to exist when it was in favor of a two state solution in 1988 by Yasser Arafat, since then we have had the Madrid conference, Oslo accords, Camp David's summit, the Annapolis Conference, and more but none of them have been favorable in the light of a two state solution or even a one state solution where Palestinians and Jews would live as equal citizens. Since 1999, 600,000 young people have been sent on Birthright trips to Israel to find a better connection with Israel and their Jewish identity with the vast majority of them being from the US and Canada, and that too has been a target of protests. While Israel allows anyone with a Jewish religion to be eligible for Jewish citizenship, under Israel's Law of Return, the Palestinians have been refused a right to return to their own previous lands by Israel. The right to return has also been debated quite a lot when it comes to legitimizing Israeli settlements and claims to Palestinian land. Strangely enough, as of now there are many Palestinians living in other countries who are older than the state of Israel itself and they aren't allowed to return to the place and homes they once belonged to.

Israeli historians and academics who are critical of Zionism face a tough life ahead of themselves. One famous example is that of Ilan Pappé, who left Israel in 2008 and went to England, after severe condemnation in Israel. However, the narrative is changing. According to a poll by the University of Maryland in 2018, support for Israel among young evangelicals has seen a major drop. [31]

When will all of this be resolved and when will Palestinians find an independent place of their own?

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